

# Chapter 8

## Library Board Information

According to the manual *IN the Public Trust*, page B-1,  
<http://www.in.gov/library/2913.htm>  
the library board:

1. sets policies
2. hires the director
3. plans for the future of the library
4. monitors/evaluates finance, long-range goals, the director, and board operations
5. advocates

B. The following is adapted from the Small Library Project Pamphlet #3, “**The Trustee of a Small Public Library**”, published by ALA, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL. 60611.

### Duties of the Library Board

1. Employ a competent and qualified librarian.
2. Determine and adopt written policies to govern the operation and program of the library.
3. Determine the purposes of the library and secure adequate funds to carry on the library's program.
4. Know the program and needs of the library in relation to the community; keep abreast of standards and library trends; plan and carry out the library program.
5. Establish, support, and participate in a planned public relations program.
6. Assist in the preparation of the annual budget.

### Duties of the Director

1. Act as technical advisor to the board, recommend needed policies for board action; recommend employment of all personnel and supervise their work.
2. Carry out the policies of the library as adopted by the board.
3. Suggest and carry out plans for extending the library's services.
4. Prepare regular reports embodying the library's current progress and future needs; cooperate with the board to plan and carry out the library program
5. Maintain an active program of public relations.
6. Prepare an annual budget for the library in consultation with the board and give a current report of expenditures against the budget at each meeting.

### **Duties of the Library Board**

7. Know local and state laws; actively support library legislation in the state and nation.
8. Establish a library policy dealing with book and materials selection.
9. Attend all board meetings and see that accurate records are kept on file at the library.
10. Attend regional, state, and national trustee meetings and workshops, and affiliate with the appropriate professional organizations.
11. Be aware of the services of the Indiana State Library.
12. Report regularly to the governing officials and the general public.

### **Duties of the Director**

7. Know local and state laws, actively support library legislation in the state and nation.
8. Select and order all books and other library materials.
9. Attend all board meetings other than those in which her/his own salary or tenure is under discussion.
10. Affiliate with state and national professional organizations and attend professional meetings and workshops.
11. Make use of the services and library consultants of the Indiana State Library.
12. Report regularly to the library board, to the officials of local government, and to the general public.

### **D. Working with the Library Board**

When you were hired, you became an employee of your library's board of trustees. Most of the time, working with your library board will be easy, because you and the library board have a common interest and a common mission: to provide your community with the best possible library service. Good board members will be your best allies in working for better

service. They will bring ideas, encouragement and enthusiasm to the library.

The keys to working with your library board are **respect, communication, and tact**. As a new librarian, recognize that the library and the library board have a history. The board is used to doing things in certain ways. Unless they have had serious problems, board members are not likely to be interested in changing what they see as successful. They are not likely to change things unless you can give them good reasons, and even then, it may take some time for them to develop trust of your judgment.

During your first year, you probably will want to spend more time in trust building rather than in problem solving with your library board. Try to get to know each board member personally, find out what they think about the library and where they want the library to be going.

**It is also vitally important to communicate as much information as possible to your library board members.** If you see a potential difficulty coming up, make sure that the board is aware of it, even if you are afraid it reflects badly on you. No one likes to be surprised by a major problem that everyone else saw coming. At the same time, do not dwell on the negative. Make sure that the board knows about the library's successes too. While it is true that the library board is charged with setting policy, you will know more about the day-to-day operations of the library. Board members sometimes have ideas that simply are not workable or that will end up hurting the library. As the library director, it is your duty to inform the board of what you expect the practical consequences of their decisions will be. However, once the decision is made, it is your responsibility to carry it out to the best of your ability, even if you don't agree with it.

Another problem that sometimes occurs is when a board member interferes with the administration of the library. The trustee may come in and tell you to make changes, interfere with the work of your staff, or go out into the community and misrepresent the library's position on various issues. In these cases, it is important for you to remember that legally individual board members have no power over the library. It is only when the board acts as a group at an official meeting that library policy is made.

It is all well and good to know that an individual board member doesn't have the authority to interfere with the administration of the library, but s/he still represents one seventh of your boss. If this trustee has been on the board for a long time or is an officer of the board, s/he may even have more power than that with the board. What do you do in a case like this?

1. First, remember to keep your cool. Treat the request with respect and tact.
2. Second, tell the board member that you do not feel comfortable making the change without the full board acting on it. Tell the board member that you will ask the board chair to put the issue on the agenda for the next board meeting or even to call a special meeting if necessary.
3. Third, look for some alternative that you can use without board approval to solve the problem between the time the problem arises and the next board meeting. Make sure that the alternative that you choose conforms to present policy.

**What should you do if the board makes a decision that you do not agree with?**

Unless the decision is illegal or unethical, it is your responsibility to carry out the decision as best you can. Try to make it work and don't express your negative opinion to the public or staff. If the decision creates problems for the library, document these and bring them to the board. Don't forget if the decision turns out to be a good one, however, to compliment the board on it. (**Idaho Librarian Survival Manual**)

## **E. New Trustees**

Once new trustees have come on the board, it is very useful if your board members and you can give the new trustee an orientation to the library. You should also make sure that new trustees have received a copy of **IN the Public Trust**, the manual for Indiana public library trustees, as well as copies of important local documents, such as bylaws, policy statements, and minutes from the previous year. You can request a copy of **IN the Public Trust** from the Library Development Office, 1-800-451-6028, or [Ido@library.in.gov](mailto:Ido@library.in.gov) as well as a new trustee packet. By working with trustees while they are new on the board, you can build the kind of positive relationship that will most benefit your library.

### **Certificate of Appointment Public Library Board Member**

<http://www.in.gov/library/2898.htm>

Once appointed by an appointing authority, according to IC 36-12-2-19, the library board member needs to have the appointing authority complete the "Certificate of Appointment" as a public library board member, then take the certificate to the library director to be filed with the official papers of the library and with the clerk of the circuit court in your county within 30 days from taking the oath of office or the library board appointment becomes **null and void** (IC5-4-1).

(You may have to provide the certificate. If you do not have any, please call Library Development Office, 1-800-451-6028 or visit this URL: <http://www.in.gov/library/2898.htm>.)

## **F. How can you convince board members to attend meetings?**

The simplest way to get better attendance is to ask an attorney to explain board member liability to your board members. Missing a meeting is risky. If those who attend take action that is illegal, even those who were not there to vote are at risk. Being there and voting “no” on the action is much better protection. The law also requires them to attend at least 6 consecutive regular board meetings or a vacancy can be declared. (IC 36-12-2-20(b))

The best answer to this question is to assume board members want to come to meetings, but something is in the way. Consider:

1. Are meetings businesslike and productive?
2. Are meetings under two hours?
3. Are the agenda items board level items or is the board dealing with trivia?
4. Is everyone encouraged to participate?
5. Does another board member contact the missing board members after the meeting and encourage them to attend next time?

## **G. How does a director get board members to take active roles in planning and participating in library projects?**

**Be positive.** Get board members to buy into planning. As ideas are mentioned and discussed, ask the board member who seems most interested or who suggested something in particular to chair a committee to develop that plan or policy. Be sure to use people from the community, staff, Friends of the Library, teachers, etc., on the committee with the board member. It is always good to get the ideas of a wide range of the community. Again, be positive. Get the board excited. Brainstorm, but don't run a topic into the ground. Your excitement can be contagious. Serve food!

## **H. Sample Library Board Bylaws**

These are **suggestions** only. They indicate the points to be covered, but each library board must adapt them to fit local conditions. Bylaws are required by Indiana Public Library Standards, 590 IAC 1, in order for the library to be in compliance with standards and qualify for state and federal funds.

### **Article I Membership**

In accordance with the provisions of IC 36-12, the library board of \_\_\_\_\_ Public Library shall consist of members chosen for their fitness for public library trusteeship.

### **Article II Officers**

Section 1. Officers of the board shall be a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Section 2. The officers shall be elected by ballot at the January meeting for a term on one year. Vacancies in office shall be filled by ballot at the next regular meeting of the board after the vacancy occurs.

Section 3. The duties of the officers shall be such as by custom and law and the rules of this board usually devolve upon such officers in accordance with their titles. (Or the duties might be defined here.)

### **Article III Meetings**

Section 1. The library board shall meet on the of each month at (\_\_\_\_) o'clock at the (location). The (name a month) meeting shall be the annual meeting.

Section 2. Special meetings may be called by the President, or upon written request of members, for the transaction of business as stated in the call. Notice stating the time and place of any special meeting and the purpose for which called shall be given each member of the board at least 2 days in advance of such meeting and to the local media 48 hours in advance, as according to law.

Section 3. A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a simple majority.

Section 4. Order of business may be:

Call to order

Reading and approval of minutes

Approval of bills

Report of the librarian

Committee reports

Communications

Unfinished business

New business

Adjournment

Section 5. *Robert's Rules of Order*, last revised edition, shall govern the parliamentary procedure of the board.

### **Article IV Committees**

(Suggestion: Special committees for the study of special problems may be appointed by the chairman, with the approval of the board, to serve until the final report of the work for which they were appointed has been filed at a regular library board meeting. Bylaws might include provision for standing committees appointed by the president at the first meeting following the annual meeting, to serve for one year. A **finance committee**, which might be either a standing committee or a special committee, would assist the library director in preparing the annual budget and represent the library board to justify it before the governing

body.

In most matters, the board's most effective operation is as a committee of the whole. Boards of larger libraries may need other committees to advise the librarian and to represent the board in the community on such subjects as buildings and maintenance, personnel, library program, and extension of service.

Special committees may investigate, study, and report all matters on which the board can **act** more expeditiously as a whole.)

#### **Article V Library Director**

The library director shall be considered the executive officer of the board and shall have sole charge of the administration of the library under the direction and review of the board. The library director shall be held responsible for the care of the building(s) and equipment, for the employment and direction of the staff, for the efficiency of the library's service to the public, and for the operation of the library under the financial conditions set forth in the annual budget. The library director shall attend all library board meetings, except those at which her/his appointment, salary, or performance is to be discussed or decided.

#### **Article VI Amendments**

These bylaws may be amended at any regular meetings of the library board with a quorum present, by majority vote of the members present, providing the amendment was stated in the agenda for the meeting.

#### **Handouts that are in the chapter:**

Certificate of Appointment Public Library Board Member

<http://www.in.gov/library/2898.htm>

Conflict of Interest Form

<http://www.in.gov/library/2898.htm>

IN The Public Trust

<http://www.in.gov/library/2913.htm>

Trustee Programs

<http://www.in.gov/library/files/TrusteePrograms.pdf>

#### **Helpful information**

IC 36-12-2 Public Libraries: Organization and Board Members

Includes board appointment information, terms, meetings, treasurer information, etc.